

DISASTER MANAGEMENT: Reducing Risk and Improving Response

Hurricanes, earthquakes, and other natural and man-made disasters in the Americas come at great cost to property and lives, particularly for the poor. Recognizing these dangers, leaders at the Quebec City Summit of the Americas agreed on a series of actions to strengthen our disaster prevention and assistance plans. The Summit Plan of Action mandates steps to improve information sharing, strengthen early warning systems, and change land-use patterns as needed.

Disasters may strike with little warning, but advance planning and preparation can reduce their effect. In Central America, the increased use of radio equipment and motorboats has significantly reduced the impact of floods. Several Andean countries have made great strides in developing national disaster plans for volcano eruptions or earthquakes. These proactive measures further the goals established at the Quebec City Summit.

In the unfortunate event of a disaster, the United States stands ready to provide targeted humanitarian assistance. However, effective preparation is also central to U.S. disaster management efforts in the Americas. The U.S. supports an extensive risk-management training program that strengthens the capacity of countries to prepare for and respond to disasters. We sponsor conferences and practical exercises in disaster management for military and government representatives from throughout the Western Hemisphere. These programs include simulations of disaster scenarios that provide valuable experience in developing crisis action plans. Through these actions, the U.S. is leading the way in reducing the effects of disasters.



Peruvian Col. Edgar Ortega works with another military participant of a simulated disaster exercise in the Dominican Republic's San Isidro Air Force Base. Military representatives from 33 Caribbean, Central, and South American countries came to this 11-day training session offered by the U.S. Army Southern Command to share disaster preparedness techniques used in the U.S. for hurricanes and earthquakes. (John Riley, AP/WWP)

U.S. ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE HEMISPHERE'S AGENDA

- The U.S. co-sponsored the Summit-mandated Disaster Risk Reduction Hemispheric Conference, which brought together disaster relief experts, members of civil society, insurance companies, government agencies, and donors to create **a plan for mitigating the impacts of natural hazards** and improving reconstruction efforts.
- Through the Third Border Initiative, the U.S. facilitates **disaster management efforts throughout the Caribbean**. Four countries in the region recently received U.S. support for community disaster preparedness, education, and mitigation, in cooperation with the American Red Cross. Additional U.S. support is helping provide for a disaster management framework in the Caribbean.
- The U.S. works with meteorological services in the region to help **improve weather forecasting** and understanding of the causes of natural disasters through the use of satellite data.